Congress Plans Its Own Probes Of Riots Despite LBJ Commission

By Robert C. Albright
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Congress plans to go ahead with independent investigations of the recent urban riots, despite President Johnson's 11-member blue ribbon commission to conduct an over-all inquiry.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) praised yesterday the caliber of members named to the Presidential unit but said he knew of no cut-back in Congressional committee plans to probe the crisis.

Senate Republican Leader Everett M. Dirksen (Ill.) agreed, saying: "Congress still wants to take its own look-see."

Dirksen suggested that the Senate Judiciary Committee, which will open hearings August 2 on the House-passed anti-riot bill, may broaden its inquiry to cover some of the bills referred to other Congressional units.

The Judiciary Committee, headed by Sen. James O. Eastland (D-Miss.), recently broadened its list of prospective witnesses to include police officials, legal experts, prosecutors, trial attorneys, and even Federal judges if they want to testify.

Dirksen, who is a member of the Judiciary Committee, said it could cover objectives of his own resolution proposing a sweeping investigation by a joint House-Senate committee.

But House Republican Leader Gerald R. Ford (Mich.) told newsmen there was plenty of room for the Presidential commission and the joint investigation, too. Ford argued that the Warren commission was unable to devote its full time to its investigation and that a Congressional Committee is best qualified to produce legislation.

Dirksen's resolution, jointly sponsored with Sen. Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.), is reposing in the Senate Rules Committee. Rules Chairman B. Everett Jordan (D-N.C.) has called a meeting of his committee for Tuesday morning to decide what to do about the Dirksen resolution and others projecting a probe of crime in general, including big city riots.

There are reports that the Senate's Permanent Investigating Subcommittee, headed by Sen. John L. McClellan (D-Ark.), will soon enter a bid for a spotlighted role.

There had been speculation that the special presidential commission would at least block out the need for a separate investigation by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, but Chairman Edwin E. Willis (D-La.) said this was not so. However, Willis said his committee's inquiry would be strictly limited to determining "if any subversive elements were involved in the rioting."

Mansfied, who consistently favored the presidential type of inquiry, denied any role in the President's decision.

Others said nonetheless that Mansfield called the President's attention to the resolution jointly introduced by Sens. Fred R. Harris (D-Okla.) and Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.), which proposed the commission-type approach.

The Senate leader, it is said, mentioned the resolution at a White House meeting with Senate committee chairman Tuesday night. Later, Harris sent a copy to the President.